Rhododendron

Bontanical: *Western – Rhododendron Alpin, R. ferrugineum. Eastern – R. molle.*
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There are hundreds of species of rhododendrons. Several of them are used in Oriental medicine and as a culinary food in Tibet and other areas. New studies are confirming the plant's anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and liver protecting potentials. Knowing which species and how to use it, is critical as all species of rhododendron (and azaleas) are highly toxic.

Western

Western Name: Rhododendron
Also Known As: Azalea, Rusty-leaved Rhododendron, Rose du Diable, Snow Rose
Main Systems: Cardiovascular, Muscular/Skeletal Systems
Key Actions: Flowers, Leaf, Twig – Analgesic, Anaesthetic, Sedative, Insecticide, Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial, Antiviral, Antifungal, Antidiabetic, Antioxidant, Anticancer, Antitussive, Expectorant. Roots – Anti-inflammatory.
Key Medicinal Uses: Arthritis, nerve pain, gout, sciatica, trigeminal neuralgia, migraine, headaches, fevers, cancer, cardiovascular disorders.

Eastern

Pin Yin: Man Shan Hong (*Rhododendri Daurici* / Leaf)
Also Known As: Nao Yang Hua, Nao Yang Hua
Main Meridians: Lung, Spleen
Key Actions: Stops Cough, Dissolves Phlegm, Reduces Fever, Relaxes Muscles
Key Medicinal Uses: Tracheitis, rheumatism, coughs, cold, insect bites, hypertension, arthritis, migraines, neuralgia, trigeminal neuralgia, muscle pain, gout, high blood pressure, gallstones, kidney stones, weak connective tissues, hardening of the muscles, joint pain associated with sensitivity to a change in the weather, asthma, gastro-intestinal disorders.

BASIC HABITAT/BOTANY: There are over 1,200 species of rhododendron, with most being endemic in China. Azaleas and Tsutsusi are two of the subgenus of flowering shrubs found in the genus Rhododendron and the family Ericaceae. Typically rhododendrons are evergreen and azaleas are deciduous. Rhododendrons have ten or more stamens, azaleas have only five. Rhododendrons have large, paddle-shaped leaves and bell-shaped flowers that end in trusses. Rhododendrons like the temperate zones.

KEY CONSTITUENTS: Grayanotoxins (including Andromedotoxins), Flavonoids (including: Farrerol and Flavonol), Manganese, Iron, Zinc, Copper, Selenium, Sodium, Chromium, Cobalt, Cadmium, Nickel, Lead, Arsenic, Saponins, Tannins, Steroids, Glycosides, Quercetin, Rutin.

PARTS MOST FREQUENTLY USED: Flower, Roots, Leaf, Twig

FLAVORS/TEMPS: Bitter, Pungent, Sour, Neutral, Toxic

CAUTION: *R. Daurici (Dahurian)*, *R. molle*, and *R. arboreum* are the varieties most commonly used in Oriental medicine. At proper doses, and not used for long periods of time, rhododendron is appropriately used as a medicine to heal. Large doses are toxic. It is not recommended for pregnant women. All varieties of rhododendron are considered toxic. Symptoms of poisoning can include sweating, coma, chills, seizure, cardiac and respiratory arrest, and even death.

HISTORY/FOLKLORE: Rhododendron and azalea share the same character in Chinese. Azaleas are a subspecies of the rhododendron genus. Several rhododendron species have been used safely and effectively in Oriental medicine.

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FUN FACT!

Rhodo Juice
In Nepal and other parts of Asia, rhododendron tree flowers are juiced to make a juice concentrate that is used medicinally and in curry dishes and beverages.

Death Threat
Azaleas and rhododendrons were once so infamous for their toxicity that to receive a bouquet of the flowers in a black vase was considered a well-known death threat.

"Mad Honey"
A certain variety of rhododendron contains a neurotoxin that can cause hallucinations and be harmful if used in high doses or inappropriately. The honey made from the flowers is called "Mad Honey."

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